

They can't deal with this shit until Monday. My mind flashes through shades of red and gray. I'm angry. I'm horrified. I'm distraught. I'm confused. Did I not state the case clearly enough? I look to the clock on the wall and catch time continuing to crawl. The phone is placed upon the coffee table, and I attempt to enjoy the silence for a moment. I desperately try to put all conflict out of my mind. Now I truly have done everything that I am capable of, and I know it. Unfortunately I don't agree that knowledge

I get up and walk to the window. The girl no longer sits on the porch. She must have gone back inside to what is probably some facsimile of hell's burning brimstone. I can't help but stare and take in every minuscule detail. I have come to know every chipped piece of paint, and the location of every single loose nail. I can't really explain it but gazing towards the madness makes me feel like I'm actually doing something useful, though I know that I'm not.

I can't stay here. Not now. Not like this. There's nothing I can do for the moment, and worrying about what if's aren't doing good things for my psyche. I exit my house and leave behind a conflicted mind of stress. I walk, so ignorant to the world around me that my eyes may as well be closed.

I haven't taken a walk such as this for the longest time. As I do so the benefits of an average life and all of its mundanity come to the forefront of my thoughts. I don't have to worry. If I did, maybe I wouldn't get hung up over this scenario. I'd be too concerned of my own failed relationships, my own demanding job, or my own haunting past instead of worrying about something that barely pertains to me and of which I can do next to nothing about.

I sit on a park bench and choose to concentrate on the sights around me rather than my own thoughts or emotions. The faint speckles of stars are beginning to appear in the near-violet sky. Some birds fly overhead, some peck and scavenge at the ground. People walk by. There's a bicycle or two among them. I begin to feel a ghostly chill through my body. The realization that summer is almost over takes its hold. The thought tastes bittersweet compared to the sour tang of the other flavors gracing the palette of my mind and I do manage to find some pleasantries within it.

The sun goes down and the mosquitoes come out. My hunger lets me know that its time to return home. So I walk and return to the world, and as I approach my house

an all too familiar clatter fills my ears. I grit my teeth and return to the warmth and silence of my house. Here I do the usual tedium. I make my dinner. I eat it. Then I clean the remains. Its a clockwork little system that's been drained of anything but necessity.

The television can't teleport me away from my own thoughts. I try to mindlessly flip through channels. Black and white movies from God-knows-when flip to cartoons flip to reality shows flip to programs in a language that I can't even identify, let alone understand. Just because the noise is gone doesn't mean that I don't hear it. I hear every deafening insult, every piercing shout, and each one makes me cringe. I fill my mind with thoughts of better days but they soon join the taint of corruption that is the world around me.

Finally there is relief in the form of alarm. It's Friday and I remember a chance to forget all of this chaos, even if it is only for an hour or a few. I pull my windbreaker off of the coat rack and once again return outdoors. Each step I take becomes filled with more and more outrage. I clutch my keys tightly and grit my teeth as if I could shut it all down with the sheer force of mind. I could be dumb and deaf and my soul would still hear the very next noise to pierce the air.

A frightened scream falls into a crescendo of hushed whimpering. The keys fall onto the driveway. I stand distant from all actuality. After racing all day my mind finally tires out. There are no thoughts. There are no words. There are no actions. There is just now, a moment defined by pure emotions. The moment comes to pass, as all do. Both moments placid and disturbed eventually die. The moments proceeding are filled with silence. Even the crickets seem to have stopped chirping in sheer revulsion. I don't hear my breaths. Perhaps they too have stopped in the mere awe of the moment. I know that my heart has stopped beating.

The shouting returns, pulling me forth from my daze. I don't know whether to be disgusted by the despicable piles of filth these people are or to be distraught at the innocents who are forced to suffer by their contemptible actions. Unsure, I choose to react with nothing. I'm lost, for thoughts, for feelings, for fears. I pick up my keys and do the only thing I know I can do for sure. I leave the premises.

The roads are lonely tonight. I'm left desolate with the passing street lights in the more suburban part of town. I feel broken. I want so desperately to forget all of this,

even for just one solitary night. But I also want to remember this lost tragedy for every waking moment for the entirety of my life. These are the struggles that deserve to be known for an eternity, no matter how much it hurts, out of some sort of respect to those affected.

My knuckles turn white as I clutch the steering wheel. I fight back sheer disaffection as all time turns into a blur. This world with its horrid causality is almost too much for me to bear, and it's definitely too much for me to ignore.

My car comes to a halt at long last. I'm here at the home of a person I call friend. The driveway is packed with three cars, so I park on the street. I turn off the ignition, pocket my keys, and exit the vehicle. My face betrays no emotion. It feels as though something integral to my being had burst into flames earlier this night and all that remains are a few dim embers, which slowly become more and more distant.

"Hey Andy, how's it going? You feeling alright?" says a man standing on the porch. He takes his cigarette out of his mouth and blows a puff of smoke into the air.

"Yeah, I'm fine," I lie. "Hey can I bum one off of you?"

"Knew you'd eventually give in," he says, rolling his eyes as he passes me a cigarette. "Suppose you want a light too?"

"If you'd be so kind."

My worries mellow out in an aura of nicotine serenity. It feels satisfactory for the moment. I find myself in pure ecstasy, almost a roar of euphoria. I nearly crack a smile at the calmness that surrounds me. I experience something like nostalgia, a remembrance of days where the world was still a happy mystery. It's at times like this when I wish for my youthful naivety above all else, the one desire that will never come true.

I throw the cigarette onto the pavement of the driveway, crush it out and go inside.

If all goes well tonight I'll be able to obliterate the thoughts and worries from the turning tornado that are my hopes and sentiments. It's a simple wish and a simple plan and if the world were perfect all would go according. The world is not perfect, though it doesn't stop me from hoping to see a glimmer of sun through the storm clouds even as their thunder clasps wildly through the air or its lightning blinds me in horribly intimate ways.

"Five card draw, deuces wild," says one of my friends. His name and face escapes me from the moment.

He deals around cards. I pick them up and stare through them, barely able to concentrate on the simplest of gambling strategies. Two of my friends burst out laughing and I join in. This silent joke is the funniest thing that I have heard all day. Once I manage to find the humor in the room the card game becomes autonomous. I win some money, I lose some money; tide and riptide now that the waters have finally calmed.

I am nearly transported away from the worries of the world, but an anchor of verity keeps me grounded. Shadows of doubt cloud the outsides of my mind and chains of fear hold my eyes in petrified patterns. I see it in hazy reflections of bourbon. I wear a Plasticine grin and laugh in broken chortles. It's all an act. I'm not sure if it's to hide my feelings from my friends or to hide them from myself, but if it's the latter case than I have most certainly failed in every regard.

The games of truth and deceit go on late into the night. Each hour drains by faster than the former, and each hour brings new stories of routine excitement. I have barely said anything all not beyond the standard call, raise, and fold but none of them truly seem to notice. I guess that's the glory of friendship. If there's a heavy demon on your shoulders that you just don't want to talk about they won't bother you to bring it into the light. I suppose that's why I have friends: the perfect people to waste time with, the perfect people to forget our innermost secrets around.

It's well after midnight before we run out of time to waste. Most of us are tired, beaten back by our escapism and diversions. I put on my jacket and leave the house with seldom a word. This isn't their problem so they don't even spare me a passing glance. As I drive the lonely road home the chaos and confusion come speeding back and crashing into my more subdued thoughts. I worry about

everything.

I'm home at long last. Streaks of dawn break the sky as I roll into my garage. Exhaustion finally hits me. I practically crash on the drive way. The only thing lifting my sullen self is the aura of silence, a true surprise to say the least. I cast my eyes to the day-broken sky, and am greeted only by the sounds of morning songbirds. They perform a lullaby of sweet relief now that the storm has broken.

My eyes droop until a scream shutters them open. I examine my surroundings. The birds continue to sing and squirrels continue to run about their day-to-day routine. No one exits their home to learn of the tragedy that lives so very close to them. I need to sleep. I'm so worried that I'm beginning to hear things.